

Rhayader
Rural District Council



Annual Report
of the
Medical Officer
of Health



For the Year 1959



Members of the Council

Year 1959

Chairman : Alderman E. T. KINSEY MORGAN, J.P.

Vice-Chairman : R. P. L. HUGHES, C.C.

Councillors :

D. H. Bound	G. D. Morgan, C.C.
O. P. Davies	A. E. Oakley
J. E. L. Griffiths	A. H. Price
R. E. P. Jones	J. T. L. Price
R. T. Knill, C.C.	W. A. Probert
I. J. Lewis	I. Thomas
Maj. Gen. R.S.Lewis, C.B., O.B.E.	A. Thompson
V. Lewis	F. G. White
S. E. Lloyd	

Committees

Public Health and Housing—All members of the Council

Chairman : Councillor O. P. Davies

Finance—All members of the Council

Chairman : Councillor Maj. Gen. R. S. Lewis, C.B., O.B.E.

Medical Officer of Health :

J. DAVIES, M.B., B.Ch.

(Medical Practitioner and part-time M.O.H.)

Public Health Inspector :

G. H. ROBERTS, M.R.S.H., M.A.P.H.I.

(Certs.—S.I.E.J.B. and Meat and Other Foods of R.S.H.)

Council Offices : Dolgerddon Hall, Rhayader

BRYNCOED,
DARK LANE,
RHAYADER. RADNOR.

Tel. Rhayader 31

24th June, 1960

To the Chairman and Members of the
Rural District Council of Rhayader

Sirs,

I have the honour to present to you the Annual Report for the year ending 31st December, 1959. This has been prepared in accordance with the instructions of the Welsh Board of Health.

Rhayader's density of population, at one person for every 21 acres, is extremely low and although there has been a slight increase in numbers on 1958, there has been a steady decline over the past ten years. In this time, the population has fallen from 4,668 to 4,210, a decrease in figures of 458, but as the births show a surplus of 41 over deaths in the same time, the true position is a decrease of nearly 500.

Many reasons are given for rural depopulation, lower living standards, education, unemployment and so on. This Council has made positive efforts to attract industry and an industrial site is now available complete with access, water, gas and electricity, but so far to no avail.

In this picture of depopulation however, perhaps insufficient credit is given to those industries already established.

Firstly, as the largest employer, is agriculture and its attendant businesses. Nearly 40% of the population is estimated to be wholly or partly dependant on this for a livelihood.

Birmingham Corporation employ about 40 men at the waterworks and a further 17 on renewing pipe track, whilst the Estates Department, with its acres of lakes and woodland, employ 20 people.

Road Maintenance and improvement has accelerated in the past few years and the local quarry maintains a staff of 50 men, whilst the County Council has a total of about 60 men employed in this district.

In recent years a car accessory firm settled into what was the old workhouse. This is thriving and now employs about 70 people.

Added to this is the hydro-electrical scheme at Ponterwydd, those engaged in forestry, and in the building and distributive trades.

All these industries, and others not mentioned, are helping to maintain pretty full employment and my own limited experience suggests that the whole community is a happy, close-knit unit and has a spirit not found in the larger bustling towns.

On the credit side of depopulation, the wild natural beauty of our countryside and its open spaces, continue to grow in popularity as a tourist centre. Properly developed, tourism could become an important industry and a project worthy of some study seems to be the development of a first class caravan site. Whether by private, or public, enterprise is immaterial so long as it is not delayed. Quite apart from possible increases in trade from such a project, caravanning is on the increase, and there may be considerable difficulty in control, and indeed danger, in permitting a multiplicity of small sites without proper facilities for sanitation or water supply.

For years past there has been a potential danger to children, bathing in the river at the Park, from untreated sewage effluent. The new sewerage scheme will obviate this menace as the works have been replaced by a storm water overflow. This should only be in operation during periods of storm when the river would be unsuitable for bathing anyway. The danger to younger children, of drowning in the river, will be lessened in coming years when the projected paddling pool is completed.

On this subject, the Welsh Board of Health ask that the report should include results of sampling and other information on public swimming baths. This will be done in future reports.

1959 was remarkable for its long dry summer and the wisdom of the Council's earlier decision to supplement the town's water supply from the Birmingham aqueduct was amply justified. Plans for the improvement of the water supply to Newbridge and Llanyre were undertaken by the Consultant Engineers and these are expected to be presented to Council in 1960.

The general health of the community remained good throughout the year, and there was no widespread illness.

For six months prior to my appointment on 1st October, 1959, the Public Health Inspector shouldered the extra responsibility due to absence of a Medical Officer of Health, and I would like to record my appreciation of the work he did. I am also indebted to him for his help in the preparation of this report.

I wish to thank you Sirs, for your encouragement, and the Council staff for their co-operation during my period of office.

I remain,

Your obedient Servant,

JOHN DAVIES

GENERAL STATISTICS

Area of District	...	...	...	...	91,240 acres
Estimated Population (mid 1959)	...	...	...	...	4,210
Number of Inhabited Houses :—					
In Parishes					
Abbeycwmhir	...	...	...	69	
Cefnlllys Rural	...	...	...	24	
Llanbadarnfawr	...	...	...	150	
Llanfihangel Helygen	...	...	...	14	
Llansantffraed Cwmdeuddwr	...	...	...	164	
Llanyre (Rural Ward 80)				}	211
Llanyre (Village Ward 131)					
Nantmel	...	...	...	205	
Rhayader	...	...	...	340	
St. Harmon	...	...	...	137	
				—	Total 1,314
Rateable Value	...	...	...	...	£89,473
Product of a Penny Rate	...	...	...	...	£365

NATURAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

Rhayader stands at the Eastern edge of the central plateau of the Cambrian Mountains in the narrow waist of Wales. These mountains, starting about two to five miles from the coast, cause the westerly winds to lift, this upward moving, rapidly condensing air leads to the abundant rainfall of this area. Parts of the Elan Valley, for example, often receive 80 - 90 inches per annum. It is fortunate for us that the town of Rhayader lies at the commencement of the rain shadow area and the rainfall is therefore less. The averages for some previous years are as follows:—

Years	Total Rainfall	Percentage of Long Average
1955	43.02	90
1956	44.38	92
1957	51.62	107
1958	51.26	106
1959	48.22	100

The average rainfall for the British Isles is 30 inches

HEALTH SERVICES FOR THE AREA

The district is served by one part-time Medical Officer of Health, a Surveyor and a Public Health Inspector. A Rodent Operator is shared with Knighton Rural District Council.

Bacteriological analyses of milk, water and ice cream are undertaken by the Public Health Laboratory Service, Aberystwyth whilst chemical analyses are done by the Public Analyst, Carmarthen.

Infant Welfare Clinics are held monthly at Rhayader and Newbridge.

There are hospital outpatient facilities at Llandrindod Wells, Llanidloes, Hereford, Aberystwyth, Shrewsbury and at other hospitals farther afield.

Nursing services are administered by the Radnor County Authority and there are six District Nurses providing for Midwifery, Health Visiting and Home Nursing.

Ambulance Services are provided by the local St. Johns Voluntary Service supplementing the County Authority.

VITAL STATISTICS

In the figures given below it will be seen that the still birth rate, at 54.5 per 1,000 is excessively high. This is because our birth rate is so small that every still birth gives a figure of 18 per 1,000. The still birth rate for England and Wales, at 20.7, has shown a progressive decline since 1954, whilst the England and Wales birth rate, at 16.5, is the highest since 1949.

The natural increase, that is the surplus of births over deaths, was 222,596 and the estimated home population now stands at 45,386,000.

The statistics are in somewhat different form than in other years and follow the lines laid down in the annual circular of the Welsh Board of Health.

Live Births

Male—legitimate 21, illegitimate 1—	22
Female— „ 29, „ 1—	30
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Total				52
Rate per 1,000 population (corrected)	15.7
Rate for England and Wales	16.5

Illegitimate Live Births

Per cent of total live births	3 8%
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Still Births

Male—legitimate	2
Female— „	1
							—
Total							3
Rate per 1,000 total live and still-births	54.5
Rate for England and Wales	...	...	...	...	...	...	20.7

Total Live and Still Births

Male ...	...	...	...	...	...	24
Female	...	...	...	...	...	31
						<hr/>
Total						55

Infant Deaths (under 1 year)

Legitimate—Female	...	...	...	...	...	2
„ —Male	...	...	...	...	...	—
Illegitimate	...	...	...	...	...	—

Infant Mortality Rates

Total infant deaths per 1,000 live births	...	...	38.4
(England and Wales)	...	...	22.0
Legitimate infant deaths per 1,000 legitimate live births	...	...	40.0
Illegitimate infant deaths...	Nil

Neo-Natal Mortality Rate

Deaths under 4 weeks per 1,000 live births	38.4
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Early Neo-Natal Mortality Rate

Deaths under 1 week per 1,000 live births	38.4
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Perinatal Mortality Rate

Still-births and deaths under 1 week combined per 1,000 total live and still-births	90.9
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Maternal Mortality	Nil
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Births and Deaths in Previous Years

	Births	Deaths	Corrected Rates per 1,000 pop.	
			Births	Deaths
1954	54	56	15.9	11.2
1955	74	57	22.0	11.1
1956	55	68	16.5	14.5
1957	68	48	20.5	12.7
1958	57	50	17.3	10.7
Total	308	279	Average 18.4	12.0
1959	52	50	15.7	10.8

Causes of Death

	Male	Female
Malignant neoplasm, lung	1	—
„ „ uterus	—	1
„ „ other sites	4	2
Leukaemia, aleukaemia	—	1
Vascular lesions of nervous system	6	1
Coronary disease, angina	4	1
Hypertension with heart disease	—	1
Other heart disease	2	2
Other circulatory disease	4	—
Influenza	—	2
Pneumonia	1	1
Bronchitis	1	—
Ulcer of stomach and duodenum	1	—
Hyperplasia of prostate	1	—
Congenital malformations	—	1
Other defined and ill defined diseases	3	8
Motor accidents	—	—
Other accidents	1	—
	29	21
Totals	50	

Circulatory diseases continue to be the major cause of death, being about 42% of the whole, this is the same as last year. At the same time cancer has increased from 12% to 18%; this should be set against a national average of over 18%.

Infectious Diseases

Pneumonia	4
Tuberculosis (Respiratory)	1
Total	5

Such low figures could mean that the local doctors had failed to send in notifications. In this case, however, I believe that there has been no such breakdown and these are true figures.

Tuberculosis

Number of cases on Register :

		Female	Male
Pulmonary	...	5	8
Non-pulmonary	...	1	0
Total		14	

New cases notified during the year—1 female pulmonary

Deaths—nil

The long awaited decline in the incidence of tuberculosis continues and a number of persons have been removed from the register as recovered.

Apart from the clinical aspect, other reasons must be better housing standards, no overcrowding and a higher standard of living. This Council can take some credit from these figures, for since the war, 96 new council houses have been built, old houses have been improved and an active campaign was waged in the past on overcrowding.

Immunisation

Figures are not available for immunisation and vaccination against diphtheria, whooping cough and small pox, but it is known that these are still being given by family doctors.

An encouraging number of persons responded to the appeal for immunisation against poliomyelitis. The numbers, however, are not so good that they could not be better and it is to be hoped that the national effort will not lose impetus. In this field perhaps local organisations can do much to help and I ask Councillors with such connections to do all they can to assist.

National Assistance Act, 1948—Section 47

No action was necessary under this section, which provides for the removal to suitable premises of persons unable to look after themselves.

Blindness

No action was taken under Section 176 of the Public Health Act, 1936.

PUBLIC HEALTH INSPECTION

An approximate summary of total visits paid for various aspects of Public Health is as follows:—

	Total Visits
Housing—	
Allocation of Council Houses	24
Unfit Houses (Housing Act Visits)	49
Rent Act	9
Survey	163
Improvement grants	56
Improvement of Hill Farms	54
Public Health Act—	
Drainage, various visits	65
„ conversion grants	9
Housing defects	34
Offensive refuse	1
Nuisance from animals	3
Caravans	15
Water supplies—public	45
„ —farms	47
„ —other houses	18
Rats and mice	37
Other pests	14
Old persons welfare... ..	3
Miscellaneous	39
Factories Acts	3
Petroleum Regulations	22
Food Inspection etc—	
Meat inspection	240
Public houses	20
Cafes, hotels	3
Food shops	36
Milk supplies	21
	Total 1,030
Samples—	
Water	44
Milk	13
Tea	1
	Total 58
No. of complaints received	49
„ „ „ in which no action was taken ...	9
„ „ „ remedied by informal action ...	39
„ „ „ not yet remedied	1
No statutory action was taken under Public Health Acts	

Housing

Formal action was taken as follows:—

No. of houses demolished	...	...	...	7
Unfit houses closed	...	...	...	6
Unfit houses made fit after informal action	10			

The Clearance Area at Newbridge-on-Wye was demolished during the year and the site left ready for development, which was anticipated to commence in the coming year.

During the routine inspection of houses for survey purposes, many defects are noted. It was most encouraging to be able to advise householders on grants now available for modernisation. This was in marked contrast with previous years when the only answer was to suggest action under the Housing or Public Health Act, action which was complicated by the very low rents applicable in this district and which previously made even essential repairs uneconomic.

On this question of grants, the money available from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for the improvement of hill farms continues to make a very worthwhile contribution towards the raising of housing standards. In the year four farmhouses were completely modernised and two new houses were being built in place of unfit houses, whilst negotiations were proceeding for a further two.

Destruction of Rats and Mice

The Council employ an operator whose services are shared with Knighton Rural District Council. The organisation appears to work satisfactorily. There has never yet been any need to send even informal notices to rid premises of rats.

The Ministry frown on any scheme of contracting to do pest destruction and this is respected. In practise farms which have had treatments are re-visited at about two intervals of three months then at six monthly intervals. Farmers are encouraged to ring this office if they have an infestation in between these times. They are well aware that if the rat population is left undisturbed and allowed to increase, then the subsequent treatment is likely to be more expensive.

This leads to the only difficulty in the present system in that it is sometimes difficult to arrange for a prompt visit if the operator is not working in the area, but so far means have always been found to carry out some form of treatment.

Meat Inspection

	Cattle not Cows	Cows	Calves	Sheep	Pigs
No. killed	18	7	1	836	74
No. inspected	18	7	1	836	74
Condemnations					
All diseases except T.B. and Cysticerci					
Whole carcasses	—	—	—	9	—
Part carcasses	10	6	—	277	4
Percentage affected	56%	86%	—	34%	5%
Tuberculosis only					
Whole carcasses	—	—	—	—	—
Part carcasses	—	—	—	—	2
Percentage affected	—	—	—	—	2½%

There were no cases of Cysticercosis

The only slaughterhouse in the district is managed by the Rural District Council. It is at the rear of a butcher's shop in the centre of the town. Its construction is mainly of corrugated iron and extensive works will be necessary to bring it up to a decent standard.

It is used by the three local butchers but not all the meat consumed is killed here. Of the total meat used, my estimate is that about two-thirds of the beef and about one-half of the sheep are killed outside the district. Killings in some previous years, reduced to units for comparative purposes, are as follows :—

1953	2,071 units
1957	1,259 „
1958	1,104 „
1959	1,186 „

The results of the T.T. scheme appears to be having results and this is the second successive year without tuberculosis in cattle. The cases of tuberculosis in pigs was localised in the heads.

The approximate weight of meat condemned was 685lbs.

Other Foods

The numbers and types of food premises in the district are

Grocers	39
Butchers	5
Public Houses	22
Bakehouses	4
Hotels	20
Cafe's, restaurants	6
School Canteens	11

Total 107

There was a complaint from one person of a beetle in a packet of tea. This was taken up with the firm concerned and no other action was taken.

No lectures were given on food hygiene, but literature and posters were distributed to food traders for display.

Offal, etc., from the slaughterhouse was collected or taken to Builth for use by a bye-product firm.

Water Supplies

All water undertakings are owned by the Council.

A considerable part of the work is concerned with private supplies, mainly farms. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries & Food grants for water supplies have meant that many farms now have private supplies that would otherwise have been prohibitive in cost.

44 samples were taken of private supplies.

Refuse Collection

Collection is made as follows:—

Rhayader, Cwmdauddwr and Elan Valley—twice weekly
Newbridge-on-Wye, Doldowlod, Llanyre, Crossgates,
Penybont and Nantmel—weekly

St. Harmon, Pantydwr, Nantgwyn, Bwlchysarnau,
Abbeycwmhir, Llangurig Road and Tylwch—fortnightly

Public Cemetery

The Council own a public cemetery. The entrance buildings include a mortuary, rest room and conveniences. The mortuary was designed so that autopsies may be performed.

There were seven interments in the year.

Public Conveniences

The Council have public conveniences at Rhayader, Cwmdauddwr and the Cemetery, whilst the Birmingham Corporation have three conveniences in the area of the lakes.

Sewerage

There are modern plants at Newbridge-on-Wye, Crossgates, and Rhayader.



